

U.S. Public Health Service
Venereal disease bulletin
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RAVAGE OF INNOCENTS MUST STOP.

THE civilized world has shown its abhorrence of the wanton ravage of innocents. Against the iron and steel militarism which could decree the starving and sinking and burning and rape of unoffending noncombatant villagers, patient peasant mothers, harmless children, and helpless old men, the civilized human family has risen in wrath.

But the ravage of innocents is not ended. In the villages and cities of our own country there remain destroyers of women and children whose toll of victims in the long years of peace is greater and more terrible than the victims of German madness. These enemies of civilization are the venereal diseases—gonorrhea and syphilis.

WHY DANGEROUS AND TREACHEROUS?

The germs of syphilis are small—so small that they can be seen only through the microscope—but they are none the less dangerous and treacherous in their attack. They attack not only those men and women guilty of immoral sexual relations. Such people are largely responsible for the spread of syphilis, but its *victims* are often blameless wives and helpless children. It invades the home and is carried from the husband to the wife and other members of the family. An innocent woman or child may be betrayed to the enemy by a kiss. Syphilis is often very hard to detect even when it is transmissible, and a husband may expose his wife entirely against his wishes and without the knowledge of either one of them. If uncured, it enters the blood stream of man, woman, or child and there intrenches itself for an attack on the vital organs years later. Then it may cause repulsive ulcers and eat away the bone and flesh. It may attack nerve centers and the brain, causing locomotor ataxia, paralysis, paresis (softening of the brain), and insanity. Sometimes in the earlier stages when most readily cured it is least visible and apparent. A germ enemy intrenched in the Nation's blood is worse than a human enemy intrenched on the Nation's borders.

But terrible as are the effects of uncured syphilis transferred to an innocent wife, the most devastating ravage of this arch disease enemy is its transmission from the mother to the child before birth. In this way it takes a tremendous, secret toll of human life in the form of miscarriages and stillbirths. Worse still, children with syphilis in their blood come into the world to lead a brief, miserable existence. Those that survive go through life with permanent handicaps. Others fill our homes for the dependent and insane. Are the ravages of Belgian women and children more terrible than this? Wounds on the battlefield do not carry physical poison to the wife and children at home.

Gonorrhea, the other venereal disease enemy, nearly always attacks the human body by invading the walls and tube passages of the male and female reproductive organs. Direct blows at the vitality of the race are thus delivered. In both man and woman it may cause, in a variety of ways, sterility, or inability to have children. Transmissible mainly by sexual relations, it is often passed unknowingly to wives. It is as if an enemy should place secret agents especially to attack pregnant women. It causes miscarriages, operations, chronic invalidism among women whose strength is of such vital importance for the proper care of children. In man, if uncured, it may lead to stricture, rheumatism, and serious organic trouble. As treacherous as syphilis, it may lie dormant for months and years to spring up again and be passed unknowingly to another person, as for instance, from the mother's body to the baby's eyes at birth.¹

Gonorrhea, innocently acquired through contact with infected persons or articles, often occurs among little girls. With these victims the disease is cruelly persistent and hard to cure.

As secret and treacherous and heartless are these enemies as is the submarine.

THE CASUALTY LIST.

We do not see the wounded victims nor do the newspapers display the casualty lists of the dead from these ravagers. But the casualties are there, hidden among the death notices, and many more unrecorded victims, destroyed before birth or dead at birth. The wounded victims fill to the doors our institutions for the insane, the blind, and helpless. These are real casualties, people dead, bodies wounded, minds destroyed—not heroic victims adorned with gold chevrons, but victims as innocent as the refugees of France and Belgium. *In our homes, hospitals, and public institutions this year ending December 31, 1919, there will be more injured and killed victims of these diseases than the United States lost during the entire war in France.*

ALLIES OF THE ENEMY.

There are, among us, human allies of this enemy of America's civilization. The quack doctors and the venders of patent medicines who prey upon their victims with "quick" cures that do not really cure, the person with one of the diseases who exposes another, the man or woman who directly or indirectly promotes the business of commercialized prostitution—such persons are giving aid and comfort to the foes of American civilization.

So, too, he who whispers to the youth that gonorrhea is no worse than a bad cold, or spreads the lie that there is a sex necessity for unmarried youth that must be gratified by sex intercourse, is an agent of insidious enemy propaganda. And the people who suppress all publication of facts and warnings regarding the enemy diseases are unwitting dupes, betraying the cause of healthy manhood and womanhood.

¹ Gonorrheal blindness in new-born babies may be prevented if the physician will use a certain solution at birth.

THE PROGRAM OF ATTACK.

Against these ravagers of the innocent and their allies America is at open and relentless war. Begun for the protection of the young men in the Army, this war is now being prosecuted by the public health authorities of Nation and State for the protection of the whole citizenship. Years of patient study have developed a means of recognition and effective cure. The military authorities showed that these diseases are not an unconquerable foe.

There will be no peace conference with the plenipotentiaries of disease. There is now organized not only a defensive campaign of cure but a great health offensive of prevention by suppressing prostitution and promoting education reinforced by recreation. State by State, city by city, village by village, from Maine to California, a united front of citizens is being built up who will fight the war to a glorious finish. American public opinion is mobilized against syphilis and gonorrhea.

MEDICAL MEASURES.

The medical profession is a vital part of the fighting force against venereal diseases. Every victim, whether innocent or guilty, is a potential carrier of the poison to others. All means, therefore, must be used to extend free, prompt and scientific treatment to all who need it. A prompt cure, moreover, cuts off the disease in its infectious stages, saving others as well as the victim from the severe consequences of a relapse and the final stages.

Clinics, free to venereal patients in every center of population, will extend prompt and accessible treatment to infected or exposed persons. These are being established rapidly by State boards of health and the United States Public Health Service. Local communities must cooperate in their establishment and support.

Many hospitals and physicians have in the past turned away venereal patients. They are now offering their facilities to help in treating these dangerous carriers.

Physicians are being required to report venereal diseases to health boards. This will give an indication, for the first time, of the casualties due to the enemy. It will also enable health authorities to quarantine those who refuse to take precautions to protect their fellow beings.

Good treatment must be offered free; poor, unscientific treatment that gives only a false cure must be suppressed. The best druggists of the country have agreed not to sell patent medicines for self-treatment or to prescribe for these diseases. Newspapers and other advertising media are refusing to advertise quack doctors and quack remedies. Prompt and thorough medical treatment for all victims will greatly reduce the danger to innocent mothers and children.

EDUCATION.

In every modern war much attention has been paid to the spreading of information about the enemy. Telling the truth about the venereal enemy to the American people will help greatly to win the war. Venereal diseases maintain themselves largely on public ignorance. State boards of health and the Public Health Service have prepared pamphlets, exhibits, motion pictures, newspaper advertisements, through which they are carrying the educational offensive to individuals and groups throughout the country.

Every mature man and boy in the United States must be taught the truth about his sexual nature. He should learn that continence before marriage is entirely compatible with health and that promiscuous sexual intercourse is a constant danger to health because practically all loose women are carriers of venereal diseases. He should learn the very serious consequences of venereal diseases to his own body and the danger of passing them on to his future wife and children.

Women and mature girls should learn of the havoc wrought by gonorrhea and syphilis.

All parents should know the facts of sex hygiene and physiology necessary for instructing their own children and for imparting to them the ideals of a chivalrous spirit, clean mind and body—a sure protection against venereal diseases.

LAW ENFORCEMENT.

The supply of prostitutes must also be reduced, as far as possible, by strict law enforcement. This means the absolute closing of any segregated districts that have survived the war, and the effective policing and supervising of streets, cafés, bonding houses, dance halls, amusement parks, for-hire autos, and road houses, in order that prostitute women will lose their means of getting customers. Prostitution, made an unprofitable business, will decrease in volume.



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Many unfortunate women after being arrested and sentenced will want to return to the old life as soon as they are released. A percentage of these are feeble-minded, others are beyond reclamation. They must therefore be confined permanently in institutions. At large they are voluntary carriers of venereal disease. Other unfortunates can be reclaimed to a decent life by having their health restored, and by being taught a useful occupation. By arresting and detaining all prostitutes, by keeping the feeble-minded and hardened prostitutes permanently isolated from society, by turning back wayward girls prepared to live a decent life, the supply of commercial prostitutes can be reduced to a minimum and the most prolific cause of the spread of the diseases largely removed.

RECREATION.

A most valuable aid to these three lines of public health attack is sound, healthful recreation for all young people. The ages when boys and girls commit their first sex offenses are the 'teens and early twenties. These are also the ages when girls and boys alike are in need of exciting recreation. Vice promoters employ for their own ends this craving for companionship, excitement, color, adventure and romance, and entice their victims by appealing to their normal desires. It is a miserable, sordid, and tawdry kind of recreation they give, leaving the venereal enemy in its wake—but it is recreation. Excitement, adventure, romance, and companionship, however, can now be furnished by communities in a wholesome, healthful way. Such recreation forms an effective attack on the venereal diseases.

THE COMBINED ATTACK.

In attacking our European enemy we brought to bear every possible agency—airplanes, artillery, engineering, hospitals, gas, industry, shipping, propaganda, full man and woman power. We did not stop to argue about the comparative value of ammunition and hospitals. We needed both and used both. In this health war, too, we can not profitably stop to argue whether motion pictures or clinics or playgrounds or detention homes are the most effective means of reducing the venereal enemy. We must use all available means. It is an emergency. It is war.

Every day we delay the construction of homes sufficient to care for feeble-minded prostitutes; every day we delay the establishment of venereal clinics or the proper education of boys and men in sex hygiene; the syphilis and gonorrhea germs are being carried into another home, blinding the eyes or poisoning the blood of more babies.

All are needed in the citizen army. Civic organizations and clubs, physicians, teachers, lawyers, ministers, nurses, mayors, police chiefs, prosecutors, judges, councilmen, are needed in the fight to make the American family safe for future generations.

FREE PAMPHLETS.

Set A. For young men.

Set B. For the general public.

Set C. For boys.

Set D. For parents.

Set E. For girls and young women.

Set F. For educators.

Additional copies of this pamphlet and others explaining the Government's campaign against venereal diseases, and giving such facts of sex as are essential for the welfare of young people, will be sent to any address free.

WRITE TO YOUR STATE BOARD OF HEALTH OR TO
THE TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
UNITED STATES PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE,

228 First Street Northwest, Washington, D. C.

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